Linking Kandla and Mundra ports by rail

595. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have plan to link Kandla and Mundra ports by rail;

(b) if so, the details thereof,

(c) the commodities proposed to be handled by rail; and

(d) the foreign exchange savings likely to be achieved by rail links?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) and (b) Both Kandla and Mundra Port are already linked by rail.

(c) Major commodities already being handled at these ports by rail are food grain, coal, fertilizers, vegetable oil and de-oiled cake Recently movement of containerized cargo by rail has also started for Kandla and Mundra Ports

(d) No foreign exchange component is involved

Bio-diesel fuel

596. SHRI R.P GOENKA Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a detailed plan has been formulated to run locomotives on bio-diesel derived from certain plants like "jatropha" and "karanj" which can be grown even on wastelands along the railway tracks;

(b) if so, the details thereof, including arrangements made, if any, to ensure steady supply of viable quantities and large scale production of bio-diesel at affordable prices, as compared to the fossil fuel currently used by the Indian Railways; and

(c) what are the advantages of using the bio-diesel fuel for the railways?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) and (b) Preliminary studies, including field trials, have been done for running diesel locomotives on bio-diesel. As and when bio-diesel becomes freely available commercially, detailed planning will be undertaken to exploit this fuel as a regular option. However, as a pilot project the Railways have a Memorandum of Understanding with a petroleum company to promote plantations on Railway land that would yield the required product for various blends.

(c) Informed opinion in the matter highlights its environment friendly property. Being an alternative fuel, it could enhance energy security.

Ongoing railway projects in Maharashtra

597. SHRI BALAWANT *ALIAS* BAL APTE: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the details of the ongoing railway projects and surveys in Maharashtra;

(b) the reasons for their slow progress and the expenditure incurred thereon, so far, alongwith the estimated cost thereof, project-wise;

(c) by when, these projects are likely to be completed; and

(d) the funds allocated to each project during the last three years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) to (d) The required information is given in the Statement I & II.